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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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Subject: "LESS WORK IN HOUSEWORK." Information from the Extension Service, U.S. War Food Administration.

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Each of us has all the time there is---24 hours a day. But a good many homemakers are trying to put a lot more into those 24 hours than they used to. Some are stay-at-home homemakers, struggling with new work---community work, school lunches, bond drives, Red Cross work. Soon they will have Victory gardens again, and canning. Helping hands have gone from the family, and few the people they can hire to help.

Some have a defense job, and still are responsible for the family meals, clean clothes and an orderly house. If they work 48 hours a week, and write off the time they spend coming and going to work, sleeping, and eating your meals, they probably have less than 50 waking hours a week for everything else.

Extension workers of the War Food Administration say it might pay these and other homemakers to study each major housekeeping job carefully, as jobs are studied in industry. See whether you could do the work in a shorter, better, or easier way, or cut it out entirely.

Take any job you think could be shortened. Maybe it's diswashing. Or ironing. Or making beds. Or clearing the table after a meal. Whatever the job is, just how do you do it now? To find out, write down every move you make, every foot you walk. You may be going back and forth across a room constantly. Maybe you don't use both hands when you could. Maybe you reach too far for the household tools you use.

For example, when you make a bed, do you walk around it to smooth each sheet and blanket in place? How many feet do you travel each time you do this? How

many hand motions do you use? How long does the job take? Write it all down. Now study these steps, one by one. Ask yourself which steps you could leave out. In making a bed, could you do all that was needed on one side before you walk around to the other side? One woman cut her time for bed-making from $6\frac{1}{2}$ minutes to $4\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, and walked 57 feet instead of 256 feet. Two or three minutes saved on one job in one day doesn't sound impressive, but 3 minutes on 365 days is about 1100 minutes or about 18 hours in a year. Put another way, 3 minutes gained on each 10 jobs done in a day is 30 minutes---half an hour saved that day, you might use to do some more important wartime work.

See if you could combine two or more motions, perhaps by using both hands. In simplifying bed-making this is one of the short-cuts. Could you rearrange your equipment and tools so they are handier to work with? An everyday example is keeping table mats, hot mats and napkins in a drawer in the dining-room within handy reach for setting the table. And, by the way, have you tried using washable place mats or doilies instead of a large tablecloth? That simplifies washing and ironing--- a tablecloth is hard to wash and iron. One homemaker found she saved a lot of steps in making coffee by putting up a small shelf near the stove. She keeps her coffee pot and coffee can on this shelf, and a measuring spoon in the coffee can. The only walking she has to do now is when she fills the kettle at the sink and puts it on the stove to heat.

See if you can simplify part or all of each job. Some homemakers can simplify serving a meal and cut down the number of serving dishes they have to wash. You can put the meat on an extra large platter, with all the vegetables arranged around it. And instead of making several trips, carrying soiled dishes a few at a time from the dining-room to the kitchen, how about using a large tray, or a wheel cart?

And here's a dishwashing idea, particularly good for homemakers who have to



heat the dish-water in a kettle. Use two pans, the second one filled with scalding hot water for rinsing. Take the dishes out of this boiling water with a pair of tongs, and stand them in the drain basket. The dishes are so very hot they'll dry themselves without streaking. The tongs are an example of an extra gadget that saves work.

The way you have always done a job may not be the best or quickest way. Have you ever asked yourself why you always make round biscuits? Biscuits would bake as well and taste as good in any other shape. If you roll your dough into a square or rectangular shape, you can cut out square biscuits with a few quick strokes of a knife, and have no scraps to work over.

Again, take the first person who thought of putting a roll of cooky dough in the icebox to harden, so she could slice off cookies as she wanted them. That woman had a motion-saving idea that thousands of women have since adopted. Speaking of knives, are your knives always sharp, and other tools in good condition?

As you study each household job, you'll find that it breaks down into about three stages: 1) That you do to get ready for the job. You line up your material and tools, and arrange them within reach around your working space. 2) The motions you use and the steps you take as you work. 3) That you do in clearing up after the job. Each person has her own individual way of doing her work, but she goes through these three stages in analyzing her methods.

Remember, when you work out time and motion-saving methods, you not only gain minutes which you can use to get more accomplished in your 24 hours a day. You will also find you get a mental stimulus in discovering a better and easier way of doing a job.

